

THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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## GRETCHEN.

By the Author of "Dame Durden," "My Lord Conceit,"  
"Darby and Joan," "Corinna," etc.

### BOOK I.

#### CHAPTER I.

I AM NOT WANTED BY ANYBODY.

"LISSCHEN, Lisschen! Are you asleep, Lisschen?"

There was no answer. The wind rustled softly among murmuring leaves. Here and there a bird twittered lazily in the dreamy noontide hush. That was all—that, and the sound of placid breathing here in the heart of the dark, deep woods that clothed the pretty heights around Neu-Waldeg.

That little village, and its sister Dornbach, were quite shut out from sight. Trees, tall and short, old and young, large and slender, grew close and thick along the sloping hills and level park-lands; trees that were clothed now in the rich and lovely leafage of spring, and shut out the hot sun with depths of cool, dim shadow.

A little stream ran swiftly under a tiny, toy-like bridge—a little span of shallow water, that caught the sunbeams' radiance through swaying boughs, and in which the little children came to bathe their bare brown limbs, and by whose banks the old wood-gatherers sat to rest and chatter. But even the little stream was quiet to-day; its lulling song was subdued. The drowsy hush of the hour seemed to have cast its spell over everything, save those bright, girlish eyes, wandering from place to place, and glancing with comical dissatisfaction at the sleeping figure on the grassy bank beside her.

Yes, Lisschen was asleep. She had fallen under the spell to which the birds, and the

butterflies, and the shallow, murmuring waters, had succumbed.

Her knitting had fallen from her hand; her head lay back against the soft turf. The grim, hard-featured face had lost something of its grimness and hardness, for Sleep, like its twin-sister, Death, has a marvellous way of smoothing out the lines and creases of the human visage, and bestowing upon it that serenity and quiet content which give a kind of beauty to even the homeliest or the most forlorn.

"Poor old Lisschen!" the girl murmured softly, "she doesn't look so cross when she is asleep. I wonder if she was always cross, even when she was young. Fancy Lisschen ever being young, though! I can't imagine it. Her face is as gnarled, and brown, and wrinkled as an old tree stem, and her hands look like leather. It doesn't seem possible that she could ever have been pleasant and fair, like the girls one sees. Now, I wonder how long she intends to sleep?"

She clasped her hands behind her head—such a pretty uncovered head it was—and leant back lazily, looking up through the green boughs to where the haze of sunshine burnt in the sky, watching the filmy clouds as they crossed it in a soft, slow measure, from space to space of the blue width of heaven.

"It is stupid lying idle here and doing nothing," she went on. "I have half a mind to wake Lisschen and make her talk, only she'll be so cross."

"Don't wake her, then," murmured a voice near by—a lazy, pleasant voice, with just a little uncertainty in its accent that seemed to give a distinct charm to the guttural German. "Don't wake her; come up here and talk to me."

The girl did not start, unexpected as was the intrusion; she only unclasped her

hands, and turned her head in the direction of the speaker. Doing so she caught the outline of a figure stretched on the grass a few yards off, and rather above the level of her own resting-place.

"Are you coming?" resumed the voice a little plaintively. "I can't see you; I am blind."

The girl rose to her feet with a slow, uncertain grace, and looked up curiously at the speaker.

The figure told her nothing, except that a man was lying on the bank, his face almost hidden, and the upper part bound by a black silk handkerchief. Some vague sense of pity and curiosity stole across her heart. She did not speak, but went slowly up the slope and stood before the stranger.

"Was I talking aloud?" she asked him softly. "I did not know."

The recumbent figure raised itself at sound of her voice. She saw then that the smooth face and finely moulded chin, and down-shaded upper lip, bespoke youth, and the sight of the disfiguring bandage touched her heart with new compassion.

"And are you really blind?" she asked.

"And all alone? Are you not afraid of losing yourself in the woods?"

A smile curved the handsome mouth under shade of the fair, faint moustache.

"I expect my servant back presently," he said. "He only went down to the Restauration. I, too, fell asleep like—Lisschen. By the way, who is Lisschen?"

"Hush," said the girl softly. "You will wake her, and then she will be cross. She is almost always cross."

"What an extremely pleasant old person!" he answered, lowering his voice though, at the girl's hint. "I will try and not wake her, as you give her so bad a character. I presume she is old and—and otherwise estimable. Is she your nurse?"

"Nurse!" the girl laughed softly. "Oh, no. I am not so young as all that. In fact, I am quite grown up. I shall soon be sixteen. Oh, no! Lisschen is our servant. She is quite old; she was old when I was a baby. She came here with me from Dornbach to-day. I live there."

"So," he said tranquilly. "I, too, live at Dornbach—for the present. I came to Vienna for advice about my eyes. They are getting better at last. But the city was so hot I really could not bear it, so I have taken rooms at Dornbach for a month. By that time I hope my sight will be quite restored; the oculist believes now that it will."

"How glad you will be!" she said softly. "It must be terrible not to see. Fancy life without the sky and the sun, and all the beautiful things of earth. I think I would rather die."

"I thought so, too," he said gloomily. "At first, when they said there was hope, I dared not believe them. I have suffered greatly both in body and mind."

"You are not—German?" she asked hesitatingly.

"Oh, no! I am English. I was at school in Bonn for many years; that is how I learnt the language. Then I went home and passed for the army."

"You are a soldier, then?"

"Yes. But I wish you would sit down; you have been standing all this time."

"How do you know that?" she questioned. "You cannot see."

A faint smile quivered over the young man's mouth.

"Have you never heard, *Fräulein*, that when a man loses one sense, Nature kindly strives to atone for that loss by sharpening those that are left? The sound of your voice tells me you are standing up."

She seated herself on the bank. The sunbeams were playing at hide-and-seek among the boughs. Below them, with her head comfortably pillowed on the soft turf, the old serving-woman slept placidly on. Now and then through the close ranks of the trees could be seen the bent figure or fluttering petticoats of a wood-picker, with her bundle of sticks on her back.

It was dusky as evening under this green shade, and sometimes through the fern and bracken a rabbit peeped, or a bird rustled its wings for flight.

"Do you know," said the girl, suddenly breaking the silence, "I have never been to Wien, though I live so near."

"That is strange," he answered. "Why don't your parents take you?"

"I have none," she said sadly. "I live with my grandfather and aunt. I remember nothing of my parents. They are angry at home when I speak of them. Lisschen says my mother was foolish and offended grandfather, and he has never forgiven her. She died, and left me a little baby. Aunt brought me home—here, and I have lived here ever since. That is all my history."

"And your father. Did he die also?"

"Yes. That is all they have ever told me of him."

"Are they old people—these relations of yours?"

"Grandfather is old, but aunt is not, and she is beautiful still—but Lisschen says my mother was more beautiful. They were twin sisters, and so very, very fond of one another. Sometimes I wonder why, if she loved my mother so dearly, she cannot love me a little. But I know she does not. She is very, very good, so is grandfather. They are always going to church, and they give so much to the priests. The priests come very often to our house; no one else comes. But this will not interest you. I forget—I have so seldom anyone to speak to, or who cares to hear me speak."

There was such a ring of pathos in the clear young voice, that it touched her auditor deeply.

"Indeed, I am much interested," he said. "Pray tell me all about yourself. I too am very lonely. I have no one to care about me very nearly, except an uncle. My parents died when I was a child. You see, there is a bond of sympathy between us already."

"Well," said the girl, dropping her voice to even softer tones, "perhaps, then, you can understand something of what I feel—not so much, of course, for you are a man, and men are so different. They have things to fill their life and interest them, and take their thoughts away from just—themselves. We haven't. Even aunt says that, and I—how can I explain?—you can't understand what it is to seem in everyone's way; not to be wanted or cared for, or needed by any living soul. I have been like that always—always. I often wonder why it is. Do you think you could tell me?"

"I certainly cannot," he answered gravely. "Because I can't imagine that a girl who is fair, and young, and innocent, and charming—as you must be—can fail to win love wherever she brings the sunshine of her presence."

"That," she said gravely, "is very pretty and very kind of you to say, but then you have never seen me, and you do not know me; you cannot, therefore, judge. I must be disagreeable or repulsive, because if I were not they would be kinder, or care for me more. I have grown weary of trying to make them love me. The priest always says to me, 'Patience, my child, patience, it will all come round in Heaven's good time.' But I think," she added drearily, "that it is Heaven's long time."

"Poor child!" said the sympathising voice beside her.

She glanced quickly at him, and then went on, her little, slender hands, plucking nervously at the daisies which grew amongst the blades of grass.

"I think, often and often, that my mere presence makes them unhappy; it recalls something—I don't know what, and no one has ever told me. If they seem inclined to be kinder, a word, or look, or action of mine will recall this shadow, and they freeze back again, and I feel once more that I am put aside out of their hearts like a criminal, or an alien."

"My dear child!" cried the young man, startled and perplexed, for there was a sound as of tears in her voice, "you are surely too sensitive; your guardians can't mean to be unkind. Perhaps you fancy —"

"Fancy," she interposed with sudden passion. "Oh no, it is no fancy, it is a feeling that has grown up with me from my childhood; it has been in my heart always—always. And now Lisschen says they wish me to enter a convent. The priests counsel it, and there seems nothing else to do with my life. Well, I am not wanted by anybody; perhaps God will let me do something for him."

She spoke so simply, with such childlike frankness, that the young man's heart was deeply touched. For a moment he was silent. His right hand was nervously fidgetting with the bandage that covered his eyes; curiosity was getting the better of prudence. He felt as if he must gain one look at the face belonging to that lovely, sad young voice.

She had forgotten his presence for a time; she was so used to being alone, and to speaking out her thoughts. When with a faint sigh she turned her head at last and looked, she was bewildered at finding two sunny blue eyes intently observing her. There was certainly no trace of blindness or weakness about them.

"You—you can see!" she cried impulsively.

"Yes; Heaven be thanked!" said the young Englishman energetically. "I was told I might only remove the bandage in a dark room; but for the first time I have disobeyed orders. I am amply rewarded," he added calmly, as he once more replaced the handkerchief. "Forgive me, but may I ask your name?"

"My name," she said, and looked down at the daisies in her lap which her restless fingers were weaving into a garland. "They call me—Gretchen."

"Gretchen," he said. "It is a pretty name."

He was thinking of the picture he had seen, which he thought he should never forget—the picture of a slender girlish figure in a simple gray linen dress, with a face as fresh and innocent and fair as the spring itself, with a wealth of gold brown hair that fell in one long heavy plait to her waist, and two lovely dark-lashed eyes of deepest violet that for a moment had flashed their startled wonder on his own.

Gretchen! an ill-omened name. He thought of it, and grew silent. Lonely—unloved—and with such a face! Amidst all the beauty of earth and sky—that delicious dreamful enjoyment which had made the repose and shadow of the wood so pleasant, a feeling of vague dissatisfaction crept. He was almost sorry he had seen her.

Meanwhile she rose from her seat and addressed him in somewhat dignified accents. "I—I think you should not have told me you were blind, if you are not," she said gently. "I felt so sorry for you, and I came to talk to you, and all the time you can see as well as I can."

"Indeed," he cried eagerly, "I told you the truth, and I removed the bandage at a great risk. I could not resist the temptation. I so wished to see to whom I owed this pleasant half-hour."

The girl stood there silent. The colour came and went in her face. She was embarrassed, and yet pleased. There was no awkwardness or constraint about her—only a certain little pathetic air of wounded pride and perplexity that made her infinitely charming.

"Are you going?" he asked quickly, as she made a movement. "Don't; it would be a pity to wake Lisschen. Tell me some more about yourself. Do you—do you really like the idea of going into a convent?"

"I have always been brought up to look on it as the best and highest life," she said slowly. "It would be wrong to rebel."

"That," he said, "is begging the question. You don't like it. Who can wonder? I suppose," he added irrelevantly, after a short pause, "you can't speak anything but German?"

"No," she said. "I wanted much to learn English, but aunt was quite angry that I should."

"And I," he said, "speak German so badly. I want to express myself quite differently to what I do."

"Oh," she said composedly; "you ex-

press yourself very well. I have understood all you said."

"And can you tell me," he asked, "why your amiable relatives dislike my language?"

"It is not," she answered, "the language only, but your nation—your people altogether—grandfather hates the very name—English."

"But why?" he asked again.

"That I cannot tell—I only know they would not speak to an Englishman, or Englishwoman, if they could help it. No doubt they will be very angry when I tell them I have been speaking to you for so long."

"But why need you tell them?" he asked.

It was the first intrusion of the serpent into the innocence of Eden; the first shadow of doubt thrown across a mind that held still the crystal clearness of childhood.

"Why?" she echoed, and looked at him and then away to the sleeping form of Lisschen. "I never asked myself the reason, but I always tell them everything. They bade me do so."

The very simplicity of the answer rebuked him, and for a moment he was silent; a curious feeling came over him; it was as if a sudden light had flashed full and clear upon his eyes, awaking his sight to some sense of transparence, and beauty, and colour, to which he had hitherto been blind.

So might a child's question or answer lift the heart of some wise philosopher to a height far above human reason, by the very simplicity of its beautiful faith.

"And so you will tell them of this—meeting—and they will be angry—and perhaps I may never see you again," he said regretfully. "Doesn't that seem a little hard?"

Her bright face grew grave.

"Do you think it is possible that I—might—see you again?" she asked hesitatingly.

He thought to himself how strangely innocence resembled coquetry, but he only said:

"Very possible—if it depends on me."

"And do you think," she went on anxiously, "that it would be very wrong if I did—not—tell them—I mean if they do not ask?"

"Certainly not wrong, from my point of view," he said energetically. "But of course I do not wish to influence your conscience. As yet, child, you know nothing of a divided duty."

"No," she said simply, "duty always



looks plain enough. I could not say what was not true."

"Let us hope they will not ask," he said gently. "For, indeed, if they are so unreasonable, it seems to me that they don't deserve such a sacrifice of self as your whole life seems. Why, the very birds, and flowers, and insects, have their summer time of freedom and enjoyment. It seems hard that you should be denied it."

"I should like to be free—quite free!" she said, drawing a deep breath, as she threw back her head and looked upwards through the swaying leaves. "But I suppose one never is that."

"Never," said her companion bitterly. "Sometimes our fetters are silver, or iron, or silk, but all the same they are there—and we can't break them if we would. You may be thankful if yours are never heavier than the duty you at present owe. Now I am going to ask a favour of you. Will you," hesitatingly—and looking up with his concealed eyes to where he knew the little girlish figure was standing, "will you shake hands with me before you go? I hear my man coming in the distance, and so we must part."

For a moment she hesitated—then something in the appealing gesture, the helplessness of the strong young form, and of the very hand that was stretched towards her seeking hers, swept doubts and prudery away. She went a few steps nearer. Her little bare hand fluttered like a bird in his strong and eager clasp.

"I am glad to have seen you," she said simply. "And I hope your eyes will soon be quite well. I think," she added, dimpling with sudden laughter at memory of the stolen look, "there is not much doubt about—that."

"If I wished to recover sight before, I wish it a thousandfold more now," he answered with so deep an earnestness that it hushed her laughter into sudden gravity. "And now—no, I won't say good-bye, only, Auf Wiedersehen."

## CHRONICLES OF SCOTTISH COUNTIES.

### FORFAR AND KINCARDINE.

ONCE more we may regret the change in the nomenclature of these Scottish lands. Angus and Mearns, the ancient names of Forfar and Kincardine, are better known and recognised, and have higher historical associations. What a part in the history

of Scotland is played by the Earls of Angus, for instance! and yet, if we refer to a modern map of the country, we shall fail to find any traces of their principality. In popular phraseology, too, Angus bodies have a separate individuality from the men of Mearns, while both are a distinct variety from their neighbours beyond the river Dee, generally known as the canny folk of Aberdeen.

According to received accounts, Angus and Mearns were two sons of Kenneth, King of Scotland, who were made the chiefs of these two divisions of ancient Pictland, once ruled by a shadowy kind of functionary, known as the Maermor. The Earldom of Angus, since the days of The Bruce, was held by the Red Douglasses, of the younger branch of that mighty house. But the hold of the Douglas upon Angus was not so strong as that of the other branch of the family upon its territorial dominions. Several powerful families of Norman origin had settled upon the fertile plain of Strathmore, and allied themselves sometimes with the Douglas and sometimes with the Stuart, as interest or passion at the moment prompted. The eastern side of the county has been appropriately called the land of the Lindsays, from that great family—great originally in wealth and possessions, and great in its fecundity, and the wide-spreading branches that have sprouted forth from the parent stem—a stem whose downfall is recorded in the fact, that, at the present time, the name has disappeared altogether from the roll of the landowners of the county.

The Lindsays claim their descent from a Norman ancestor, and derive their name from an obscure little commune named Limesex on the chalky table-land of the Pays de Caux; but the first of the name who comes into any prominence in Scotland is William Lindsay, of Crawford, High Justiciar, under William the Lion, whose three sons founded the three principal houses of Lindsay. The chief seat of the family was Finhaven Castle, now a ruin, between Forfar and Brechin; and they had also a fine house in Dundee, a stately mansion with its gates and turrets. And forth from these noble gates rode Sir David the Earl, with his train of thirty knights or men-at-arms, when he embarked from the Rock of Saint Nicholas, just opposite, to sail for London, and meet Lord Welles in mortal combat.

There was no personal quarrel between

the two Knights, only a question as to the respective prowess of their countrymen. The lists were prepared on London Bridge, and Richard the Second, the English King, with Ann of Bohemia, his Queen, watched the combat from a gaily decorated stand, while the houses and gateways on the bridge, the banks of the river, and every point of vantage on either side were crowded with spectators. These last were woefully disappointed when the Scot proved the better man, and held his antagonist at his mercy; but the stranger had fair play, and the King even graciously assured him that, as he had beaten his adversary, he might kill him if he pleased. The Scottish Knight, however, preferred to give away his vanquished foeman to the Queen, who kindly restored him to himself; and so, after much feasting and pomp, Sir David went back to his own country, where everybody felt much encouraged by their champion's prowess.

There is nothing left of the old home of the Lindsays in Dundee; but Finhaven, with its melancholy ruins, is still haunted with the memories, and, as stories go, with the very spectres of the lost Lindsays.

Chiefly to be remembered is Alexander, the fourth Earl, whose disposition is shadowed forth in the epithet of the Tiger Earl, while his personal appearance is suggested in his alternative title of Beardie. There is no doubt that he was a terrible ruffian.

It was Beardie who, with the Earl of Ross, formed that celebrated alliance with the Black Douglas, which was only broken by the dagger of the King. And yet the murder of the chief of the conspiracy did not daunt the Tiger Earl. When the Gordons of the North declared for the King and marched into Angus, the Earl came out to meet them, and felt sure to win the day. His own men-at-arms were but little outmatched by the Gordons, and he had a reserve of the best axemen of Angus, under the Laird of Balnamoon. Just before the battle the Laird had occasion to trouble his chief about a little matter of business. There were certain lands convenient to Balnamoon, "the whilk if the Earl might grant to his faithful servant—" The Tiger cut short further speech with a growl. "It was not a time when the spears of the Gordons were glittering in their front to be talking of wadsets and feuferms. To the front and lay on, Balnamoon."

The Earl may be supposed to have fought like the incarnate tiger he was; but in the thick of the fight he looked round for his axemen, and behold they were disappearing over the hills. The Earl had the good sense to know when he was beaten, and presently rode for his life with the rest of his mounted followers.

The chase was sharp over the carse and right up to the castle wall of Finhaven, when down went the heavy portcullis behind the last of the Lindsays, and the Gordons hastily dispersed, expecting a flight of arrows from the battlements. So close had been the chase, that one of the youngest and bravest Gordons had ridden into the courtyard with his enemies, and was thus trapped like a rat in a cage. But the youth kept his own counsel; he was battered, and dented, and splashed like the rest; no one noticed him, and he rushed into the hall with all the other warriors, hungry and thirsty from the fray. Then he heard the old Tiger roar, and swear, and rave, invoking all kinds of imprecations upon himself and Balnamoon, as he tossed off cup after cup of blood-red wine from his silver goblet. Then there was an alarm that a band of Gordons was riding that way, and the whole assemblage rose tumultuously, and hastened to mount and ride out to meet them. The young foeman contrived to snatch up Beardie's silver cup in the confusion, and riding out with the rest, took occasion soon to part company, and presently was lucky enough to join his chief with his trophy.

The Tiger Earl, as has been said, knew well enough when he was beaten; and, as matters went badly with the Douglas faction, he tried to make his peace with the King. Now the King was bitterly incensed against the fiery Earl, and had sworn a great oath that he would destroy Finhaven Castle; but the Earl coming before the King barefooted, and trussed like a criminal ready for the scaffold, the Royal pity was aroused for such a proud man thus fallen; and the King forgave him all the more readily that the Douglasses were still strong, and that the Tiger and his men would be a valuable reinforcement for the Royal army. Thus the King rode back with the Earl to Finhaven, where he was feasted right royally.

The tall keep still remains, shaken, riven, but still unsubdued by time, as a testimony to the King's clemency; and, if tradition is to be believed, as a monument

to the cruelty of the Tiger Earl. For high up on the crest of the south-east wall of the castle, are still visible a row of spikes, from which it is said the heads of his victims would be seen, standing in a row, on any fine summer's day; among others, in spite of the prayers of his lady, a poor wandering minstrel with his harp, whose fate is told in the ballad:

The lady craved pity; but nane wad he gie,

The poor aged minstrel must die,  
And Crawford's ain hand placed the grey head and lyre

On the spikes o' the turret so high.

The common place of execution was the wide-spreading chestnut tree by the castle gate. This was a majestic and venerable tree, a Spanish chestnut of a kind then unknown elsewhere in the neighbourhood. Some Roman soldier had dropped a nut upon the spot—centuries before—out of which the tree had sprung, and so went on flourishing from age to age. Beardie himself regarded the tree with a kind of superstitious veneration; and once, when a poor youth lopped a branch from it to make a walking-stick, Beardie pursued the lad with horseman and hound, and overtaking him, brought him back, and hung him to one of the branches of the fatal tree. The vengeance of Heaven, long suspended, for this ruthless deed descended upon the house of Lindsay. The victim never ceased to haunt the place of execution; indeed he haunts it now, and, known as Jack Barefoot, hovers about the place as a reproach to the tortured spirit of the wicked Earl. Body as well as spirit, indeed, for although pedigrees tell us that Earl Beardie died A.D. 1454, it was currently believed that the wicked Earl still survived in some secret chamber of the ruined castle, according to the popular saying:

Earl Beardie ne'er will dee,  
Nor puir Jock Barefoot be set free,  
As lang's there grows a chestnut tree.

Even had the curse depended upon the existence of that particular chestnut tree, the expiation would have had a long course, for the chestnut still held its ground by the castle wall up to the year 1760.

As in many another family, there was a kind of alternation between good and bad, of gentle and ferocious, with the Lindsays. To a wicked Earl succeeded a good Duke—yes, actually a Duke—with a patent still in existence, about which there has been question of privilege even in the present century. Then the good Duke had two bad sons, the younger of whom killed the

elder, and did not venture to claim his father's dignities. The fratricide made some atonement for his crime by dying gallantly on Flodden Field. A successor, the eighth Earl, David, had a son known as the Wicked Master, whose character was so abominable that, after solemn arraignment at Dundee in 1630, he and his family were blotted out from the succession, and the lordship and estates transferred to the kindred house of Edzell. The Wicked Master, however, had plenty of friends, who fought lustily for his rights, and even besieged and took Finhaven Castle. Eventually the Wicked Master's son succeeded, who was an active partizan of Queen Mary's cause, and his son was the hero of a combat with the rival house of Glamis. Lord Glamis was at that time Chancellor of Scotland, and passing down Stirling High Street with his train, he met the Lindsay, who had also a great following of fighting men. The two Lords passed each other without exchanging any greeting, and some of their men coming into collision, a brawl arose, sword thrusts and pistol shots were exchanged, and the Chancellor fell, with a bullet through his head.

The last of the Earls of this line is known as the Captive Lord, as he had wasted and mismanaged his estate in such fashion that, by sentence of a kind of family council, he was committed to safe custody in Edinburgh Castle. The captive's daughter, Lady Jean, neglected and forlorn, married "a public herald," otherwise a town bellman, and even fell to the grade of a public mendicant, and to begging for crusts and broken victuals, where her forefathers had held almost princely sway. Indeed, the progress of the Lindsays seemed ever from bad to worse, and people long recalled a prophecy, or malediction, of Cardinal Beaton, to the effect that every Lindsay should be poorer than his father.

The new line of Earls Crawford was no more fortunate than the old. The last of them was a spirited soldier, who fought first of all in Spain, and then took a command for King Charles in the Civil Wars; was at Edgehill, and many another fight and skirmish; and, when his master's cause was lost, went back to Spain and there sought military employment.

The Laird of Edzell was now the chief of the line. The ruined towers of Edzell, lying on one of the streams of the North Esk, had been for centuries the hospitable

home of the Lords of that ilk. It was known as the Kitchen of Angus, whose doors were never closed to the poor and needy; but the kindly qualities of the Lindsays only helped to their ruin. The last Laird of Edzell was compelled to sell his estates, which were bought by the more fortunate Maules, Lords Panmure, and, wandering away, he died at last as the hostler of a humble country inn.

Another line of Lindsays has brought down the family honours to the present day; but their history is not connected with Angus, where, as has already been said, the name is no longer to be found in the roll of landowners; but so prolific was the family, and so widely spread are its ramifications, that there are Lindsays all over Scotland who justly regard themselves as scions of this ancient house, the Clan Lindsay of that fine "Lament":

Bright star of the morning that beamed on the brow  
Of our chief of ten thousand, oh, where art thou  
now?

The sword of our fathers is cumbered with rust,  
And the race of Clan Lindsay is bowed to the dust.

The ruin and desolation of Edzell Castle is not due to its present proprietors, for soon after its purchase Lord Panmure joined the rising of 1715, and on its suppression all his lands were forfeited to the Crown. Edzell then fell into the hands of the York Buildings Company. This company, whose name sounds strangely out of tune in such a connection, was incorporated by Royal Charter in 1690 for raising water from the Thames to York Buildings, near the Strand, to supply London in competition with the New River Company. Its objects were extended in 1719, and a further capital of one million two hundred thousand pounds raised to purchase forfeited and other estates and grant annuities and life assurances. The company became insolvent in 1733, and the estates were managed for the benefit of the annuitants and other creditors till 1764, when most of them were sold by public roup in Edinburgh. Many of the lots were purchased by the descendants of their former proprietors, and Edzell came again into possession of the Panmure family. But half a century of neglect and spoliation had reduced the old castle and home of Edzell to a melancholy ruin, only the shell remaining of its ancient walls, and those parts which could not be profitably disposed of.

Another powerful family shared with the Lindsays the territorial influence of the county. The Castle of Glamis, situated in the most fertile and lovely part of the

Howe of Angus, is a noble specimen of the lordly mediæval dwelling, half castle and half palace. With its towers, turrets, extinguisher roofs, and corbie-stepped gables, the aspect of Glamis Castle is at once quaint and imposing. About the old walls cluster memories from the earliest period of Scottish history.

All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Glamis!

Tradition tells of a Scottish King murdered within the walls of Glamis, and the history of the Lords of Glamis would supply materials for any number of wild mysterious tales. The founder of the line was Sir John Lyon, called the White Lyon, from his complexion, who married a daughter of King Robert the Second by Elizabeth More. The King gave Glamis, hitherto a Royal seat, to his favoured son-in-law, who was slain by one of the Lindsays in some broil. From that time the line ran on high in Royal favour, and increasing its possessions by advantageous alliances till the death of the sixth Lord Glamis in 1528. The young and beautiful widow of Glamis married Archibald Campbell of Nepneith, and, with her husband, fell under the suspicion of conspiring against James the Fifth. Informers and spies were abundant, who played upon the King's rapacity and fears; and on the evidence of such, Lady Glamis; her husband; her son, Lord Glamis, a mere youth; a kinsman, John Lyon; and an old priest, were arraigned and condemned for high treason, in compassing the death of the King with poison or witchcraft. On the seventeenth of July, 1537, the lovely Lady Glamis was burnt alive on the Castle Hill of Edinburgh amidst universal pity and compassion. Lord Glamis was reserved, with the sentence of death hanging over him till he should come of age; but all the family estates were confiscated, and the King himself took possession of Glamis Castle, and visited the place at times during the short remainder of his life.

With the death of King James all this evil fortune came to an end; the false witness recanted, the young Lord was set free, and Glamis was restored to him.

Except for this interregnum, the fortunes of the family were prosperous enough. There was the Chancellor killed by the Lindsays in Stirling town, and who left a son only two years old to succeed to his honours. Hence the Tutor of Glamis became an important personage, and it was this tutor or guardian who was con-



cerned in that conspiracy known as the Raid of Ruthven. He it was who, when the young King burst into tears on finding himself a captive, sternly told him "that he might greet as he pleased, for it was better that bairns should greet than bearded men." Still the family were devoted to the Stuarts, and especially when they fell into misfortune. The fifth Earl of Strathmore was killed at Sheriffmuir; but his brother, who succeeded him, made his peace with the house of Hanover. Four brothers succeeded each other as Earls of Strathmore, and the family seemed on the verge of extinction. But the youngest of the brothers had a son John, who succeeded to the Earldom and raised the territorial importance of the family to its highest pitch by marrying the great heiress of the period, Mary Eleanor Bowes, of Streatlam and Gibside, in Durham. At the end of nine years' married life the Earl died, and his widow became again the richest match in England, for only a small portion of her vast estates were settled on the title. The mark of adventurers and fortune-hunters, the Countess, who was of a weak and excitable nature, was entrapped into a marriage with one of the most worthless of her admirers. This was Stony Robinson, a man of brutal disposition, who treated the poor Countess with such cruelty that any affection she might have had for him was soon turned to loathing and detestation. The Countess escaped from her husband's control, was captured, tortured, as she affirmed, and escaped again. The relatives of her late husband protected her, and the courts of law were invoked, and Robinson was put to silence. The Countess did not long survive her troubles, and all her estates fell to the house of Strathmore.

From about this period, the last quarter of the eighteenth century, begins what is known as the Mystery of Glamis—the existence, that is, of a secret chamber in Glamis Castle, containing some presence of a weird or horrible character. It is curious to trace the beginning of this story, of which Walter Scott was perhaps the first to publish any notice. The great novelist had himself visited Glamis, and alludes to the secret chamber, but with some reticence, as if not altogether sure of his ground. The next authority is Robert Chambers, who seems to have visited Glamis at some period before 1824, the date of publication of his "Picture of Scotland." Chambers introduces the legend of

Earl Beardie, who never had anything to do with Glamis by the way, who is supposed to sit playing cards in the mysterious room, in fulfilment of some ancient doom, which expires only on the final Judgement Day. And Mr. Warden's account of Glamis, in his "History of Angus," published in 1880, states that "in the intricacies of the Castle it is supposed there is a room which, if discovered, would be found to present a scene far beyond the simple horrors of a haunted chamber." Mrs. Oliphant, too, has written a very thrilling story, published in "Blackwood's Magazine," December, 1876, having the secret chamber and its horrors as a "motif," in which Glamis is transparently alluded to.

Whatever the nature of the mystery, it is understood that it is now fairly dead and buried. The cupboard may be there, but the skeleton is gone; the ghost has been laid with bell, book, and candle, and is no longer a terror in the secret watches of the night.

Had the Lords of Glamis been in fact as well as in title also, the Lords of Strathmore, they would have possessed, perhaps, the richest Earldom in the kingdom. For Strathmohr, or the Great Valley, embraces not only the fertile Howes of Angus and of Mearns, but stretches from the coast by Stonehaven to Cowal in Argyle, spacious, fertile, and luxuriant. It is a valley in the strict sense of the word, for it is not connected with any existing river system; it is rather a wide depression enclosed by independent chains of hills, and watered by innumerable streams that flow across it to the coast or to the great estuaries of the Tay and Forth. Thus Angus, while it has its share of the Strath, has also three other districts that deserve some attention—the Shore, the Sidlaws, and the Braes o' Angus, these last being the hills and passes that rise gradually to the Highlands.

The Sidlaws, indeed, lying just to the southward of Glamis, occupy but an insignificant space in the county; but one of their nearest summits is occupied by the Castle of Denoon, an early earthwork with an enormous vallum twenty-seven feet high and thirty feet thick.

Immediately to the south lies Dundee, one of the most thriving towns in Scotland. It is Bonnie Dundee, bright, stirring, and pleasant, with a fine flavour of tarred ropes and tanned nets, of sail-cloth and ships, apparel and tackling, of linen and jute, with the less savoury, and yet most welcome odour of whale and seal

oil, when the ships come home from their voyages to the frozen North.

Little is left of the old towers, walls, and mansions of Dundee, but the Cowgate Port has been spared, more as a religious than a civic memorial; for from the battlements of the gate in 1544, preached the famous George Wishart to the plague-stricken who were camped outside the wall on one side, and on the other to those worthy burghers who had escaped the pest, and who stood reverently in the street to listen.

A quaint old story, too, is to be found in the Chronicles, of how Henry, Earl of Huntingdon, brother of King William the Lion, being abroad on the sea returning from the Crusades, his brother the King, in joy at his approach, vowed that he would give him the ground on which he should land. The Earl landed at Dundee, and ex voto, a grand church was built, whose noble tower still remains to give dignity to the aspect of the busy town.

Then there was a terrible storm and sack of Dundee in the civil wars by the soldiers of General Monk, with much plundering of harmless citizens irrespective of their politics or religious opinions; while the governor's head was struck off as a warning to any disposed to over-obstinate resistance to the established Government.

A story of somewhat later date is the burning of Grizel Jeffrey for witchcraft, an occasion for a general holiday. A ship-master coming into port after many years' foreign trading, noticed the holiday aspect of the town, and enquired the cause. This was his native town, he said, and he had come home after long years to see his old mother, and make merry with his friends, and he would be delighted to share their holiday sports. Then the men of the port pointed out to him the blue cloud of smoke that was rising over the house-tops, and told him they were burning Grizel Jeffrey, that notorious old witch. At that the shipman turned pale, and fell against the rigging, when, as soon as he could speak, he bade his men cast off the moorings, and so he set sail. And then people remembered that Goody Jeffrey had a son who was a seaman, and they guessed that this must be he who had sailed into the port, and thus he had been welcomed home.

But the saddest story of all, perhaps, is of that Sunday just after Christmas, 1879, when in the mist, and rain, and storm, and the darkness of a winter's night, a train, containing nearly ninety persons, started

from the south side of the Tay bridge. This was the largest bridge in the world, perhaps—ten thousand six hundred and twelve feet in length, divided into eighty-five spans, of which the widest stretched across two hundred and forty-five feet. The rail platform was only fifteen feet wide, and adapted for a single line, and was eighty-eight feet above high-water mark.

In the mist and rain the train departed, but it never reached the further side. There was a desperate leap of all that mass of wood and iron and palpitating human forms, as, with falling girders and broken columns the whole plunged headlong into the roaring tide—an awful second of the agony of death for all those living creatures, and then swift doom. Few fragments of the train and few human bodies were recovered; but some months afterwards the wreck of one of the railway carriages was found on the opposite coast of Norway.

The set of tides and currents from the Tay to the opposite coast of Norway is also illustrated by the story of the fisherman's stick or nobby, used in the salmon fishing, which was dropped into the river, and found by someone on the Norwegian coast. The nobby was branded with the name of its port of origin, and was returned to its owners, who gave the name of Norway to their fishing station in commemoration of the incident.

Right in the track of vessels making for the Tay, is the once dangerous Inchcape Rock, now crowned by the Bell Rock lighthouse.

The worthy abbot of Aberbrothock Had floated that bell on the Inchcape Rock; and the ruins of the Abbey, built of the red sandstone of the district, still crown the little town of Arbroath. Here everything is red—houses, buildings, and the rocky coast-line. Numerous caves have been hollowed by the restless sea in the soft sandstone; caves that, according to tradition, were once inhabited by a wild, half-savage race but little akin to the Angus bodies in general.

Pitscottie tells the story of a family of cannibals, living in one of these caves, who were hunted down and destroyed by the neighbouring inhabitants. All were consumed by fire except one yearling female child, who, although brought up on ban-nocks and brose, eventually took to the ghoulis habit, and was also burnt as a public example.

The red sandstone rock continues along the coast-line till it culminates in the pro-

montory of Red Head. Beyond lies Montrose, a pleasant and even charming town, from whose port the Chevalier sailed, in 1716, on the failure of the Jacobite rising. A little inland is Brechin, with its cathedral tower and a round tower of the Irish pattern; and here also is Brechin Castle, the ancient seat of the Maules, now represented by the Ramsays, Earls of Dalhousie.

Beyond, along the shore of Kincardine, or Mearns, the shore stretches along, desolate and almost uninhabited, save for some fishing villages, such as John's Haven and Bervie. But Stonehaven has prospered of late as a watering place, and the ruins of Dunottar Castle, close by, are extensive and imposing. At Dunottar the regalia of Scotland—its Honours, as the people named the symbols of Royalty—were deposited in the Civil Wars. The Castle held out for the King, and the regalia were cleverly removed before its surrender and hidden by a neighbouring minister.

As for Kincardine burgh—if burgh it ever were—it has almost reached the vanishing point, in the form of a hamlet; but all about are traces of primeval defences, with the foundations of a vast fortress, or city of refuge, which may have played its part in unknown wars. Here, too, linger the traces of legend and romance connected with the story of Kenneth the Third and the vengeance of Fenella; with the statue of brass and the brazen apple; or with other pleasant devices of the mediæval and mystic fashion.

#### "ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS."

IN many weekly newspapers and magazines "Answers to Correspondents" form a prominent feature; and those which are classed under the general heading—where any classification is made—are usually as interesting as they are diversified. The practice of writing to editors of newspapers for information is older than most people imagine. In the closing years of the seventeenth century were published the first germs of our invaluable friend, "Notes and Queries." One of the most noticeable of the publications devoted wholly to "Answers to Correspondents," however, was the "British Apollo," which, first issued in the days of "Good Queen Anne," reached its fourth edition in 1740. It professed to give "ten thousand answers to curious questions in most arts and sciences, serious, comical, and humorous. Approved of by

many of the most learned and ingenious of both Universities, and of the Royal Society," and to be "performed by a Society of Gentlemen." Many of the answers given in this volume would be laughed at nowadays by a lad of far less intelligence than Macaulay's schoolboy. How far we have (thanks, principally, to zoological gardens and the like) advanced in our knowledge of natural history may be judged from the fact that the following question is put to the "Gentlemen":

"Pray, what is a rhinoceros?"

This is the answer given:

"A sort of creature strangely different from every other, having one horn, and shaped not unlike an elephant."

After other particulars the "Gentlemen" conclude:

"'Tis needless to enlarge upon this subject, since all persons may at present see in town the skeleton and hide of one of the finest, and the only female ever known—a sight that's truly worth the observation of a man of knowledge in the works of Nature."

How editors of newspapers came to be regarded as the confidants and confessors of persons in every station of life is more than we can explain. Yet editors of journals devoted to the interests of young ladies are, if we may judge by the "Answers to Correspondents" which they contain, looked upon as infallible, and consulted with the same freedom as if editors were pledged to secrecy. They are called upon to arbitrate in love quarrels; to settle all knotty points in connection with the acceptance and wearing of engagement rings; to decide the shades of almost innumerable samples of hair; to say how long courtships should last;—in short, to act as guides, philosophers, and friends. Many people suppose that all, or nearly all, of these answers are fictitious; but this is a mistake. A prolific novelist could not invent a page of such answers weekly. As the "Saturday Review" once said in reference to the "Answers to Correspondents" in one of the young ladies' journals, they "cannot be fictitious, a romance and a life history being embodied in almost each of them."

In the boys' journals the "Answers to Correspondents" are of a very different stamp. The editors seem to be hardly ever troubled with any very difficult or painful subjects, most of the answers being about out-door pastimes, pet animals, the Army and the Navy, handwriting, formulas for producing

moustaches, and the like. One peculiarity struck us, in looking over a number of boys' journals, and that is, that those who require information about the Army and the Navy, almost invariably adopt the pseudonym of "Constant Reader." The obvious inference is, that if they were constant readers, they must have seen the information for which they asked at least once a fortnight. That all of these answers are genuine is, however, more than we should care to say.

Many of the largely-circulated weekly newspapers devote considerable space to answers on legal and medical topics. But there is a certain amount of risk in following some of the answers given. For instance, often in seeking legal advice by letter, some important facts or dates are not mentioned, and, therefore, the lawyer who answers the question may (quite unwittingly, of course) advise wrongly. With regard to medical questions, most doctors are of opinion that the practice of writing for medical advice is to be condemned, for the reason that it is impossible for any physician, however clever he may be, to accurately determine a disease from a few lines of writing from the person affected. In common and simple complaints such a thing is, of course, quite possible; but, then, the information required could easily be found in any cheap medical work, of which there are many published.

Looking through a number of "general" "Answers to Correspondents," one cannot help being struck with the fact that certain questions are asked very often. Is marriage with a deceased wife's sister legal? Is Liverpool a sea-port town? What is the population of London? Are rabbits game? Which is the longest tunnel in England? How many acres are there in Yorkshire? How many letters are there in the Bible? Answers to these and similar questions; prescriptions for the cure of dyspepsia; instructions as to the renting of houses; replies to queries on rules of etiquette; occupy many columns weekly. The number of letters in the Bible and the number of acres in Yorkshire seem peculiarly fascinating subjects; indeed, a weekly newspaper declared a short time ago that, in one week, no fewer than sixteen ladies and gentlemen had addressed it on these questions.

We have already said that the genuineness of certain answers to correspondents is more than we should like to vouch for; indeed, as a matter of fact, some of them are transparently fictitious. Most of us remember that, when Nicholas Nickleby

was waiting for Miss Snevellicci, in that lady's apartments, he saw on the table an open scrap-book, containing a number of newspaper cuttings, amongst which was the following "answer" to a "correspondent": "J. S. is misinformed when he supposes that the highly-gifted and beautiful Miss Snevellicci, nightly captivating all hearers at our pretty and commodious little theatre, is not the same lady to whom the young gentleman of immense fortune, residing within a hundred miles of the good city of York, lately made honourable proposals. We have reason to know that Miss Snevellicci is the lady who was implicated in that mysterious and romantic affair, and whose conduct on that occasion did no less honour to her head and heart than do her histrionic triumphs to her brilliant genius."

Mr. Crummles is another case in point. The author of "Nicholas Nickleby" probably knew as much about the interior working of a newspaper office as a good many men, and no doubt he thus intended to satirise the fictitious "Answers to Correspondents" which are published with the object of puffery. In some obscure papers the "puff direct" is used, and in these prints an advertisement of the article or firm "puffed" will generally be found in another column. In connection with the answers to medical questions glaring puffs can be seen in some papers by those who can "read between the lines." Recently, one of the cheap medical journals accused one of its rivals of prescribing a nostrum for the cure of diseases for which it was absolutely worthless. Whether there were any grounds for the charge, we cannot say. In some papers many "Answers to Correspondents" are obviously written to fill up a certain amount of space.

In cases of this sort, however, not much harm is done to anyone. It is when various forms of the puff are used that readers are imposed upon; but it is pleasing to know that correspondents' questions are, as a rule, answered accurately and fairly, and that very often much good advice is given to those in need of it.

### MY POOR LITTLE STORY.

#### A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

MOTHER says appearance is of no consequence—ultimately. I wonder what she means by ultimately? I think she must



mean after death, for I am sure being pretty matters to a woman as long as she lives.

Father judges the matter differently, and much more correctly, I think. He says beauty is like a letter of introduction; as long as they who bear it don't themselves discredit it, it opens all portals to them.

To be the one plain member of a singularly handsome family, to love beauty and to lack it, is a hard enough lot when one is young and keen of feeling; but, no doubt, I shall come not to mind ultimately—which means when I am dead.

Now, there was Marion, my sister! I wonder how many people have ever seen a woman as beautiful as Marion! Her life and mine lie far apart now, and I do not know that either of us desires that fact altered; but, for all that, I never think of her, as I saw her a hundred times, without a little thrill of rapture.

She was neither fair nor dark, but what the French call *châtain*, her eyes were blue as sapphires, and soft and serene as a summer sky, and her hair was auburn, that is, golden in the sunshine and bronze in the shade. She was tall and slim, but straight as a pine, and she carried herself in a Royal way, like a Queen among courtiers who loved her. Oh, I do full justice to her beauty, and to everything else that was winsome about her!

Mother had made a love-match; had married father in spite of all her family; and, naturally enough, her family ignored her after that. Father was only a curate, and of no particular antecedents; and her father was Lord Hurst, of Stonehurst, fourth Baron of that name, and she might have called herself the Honourable Mrs. Errol, had she chosen. But she never did choose; she was satisfied to be a poor man's wife, she said; and she adapted herself to the circumstances attendant on her altered fortunes in a way that I knew to be heroic, when I understood.

She never talked of her family, and we children had no personal knowledge of anything better than the shabby house we lived in, the poor food we consumed, and the poor clothing we wore; and yet, in some inexplicable way, we knew that our grandfather was a peer, and regarded ourselves as very much better than our neighbours, in consequence. I have no doubt, now, that our little airs of self-importance often rendered us pitifully ridiculous; but, at any rate, they made

us fearless of everyone, and lent us a bearing that, perhaps, was preferable to rustic shyness.

I must have been between seven and eight years old when Lord Hurst died, without even seeing mother or sending her a message; and I remember yet the misery she suffered in consequence.

I suppose when people are dead we begin to tell ourselves—untruthfully enough, I am sure—that they were always right, and then we break our hearts because we grieved them.

From all I ever heard of Lord Hurst I do not think there was any room for doubt that the deceased Baron was a cold, obstinate, old curmudgeon; but if he had embodied all the virtues in the calendar, mother could not have idealised or lamented him more.

"To think that he died and never forgave me!" she used to say to father, and what could father answer? And her family continued the feud after Lord Hurst's death, and no one held out the olive branch to mother. But she never blamed them. Some of them were younger than she, and she only said: "After so many years they could not possibly care."

It was quite three years after Lord Hurst's death, and when no one was thinking of anything of the kind, that Aunt Hilda came to look us up and to make friends. She had spent about fifteen years pondering over mother's misdoings, and I certainly think she might have forgiven her a little sooner; but that never seemed to occur to mother, who wept on her sister's neck as if she had been an angel of mercy.

Aunt Hilda was no longer a young woman, and I think she can never have been a pretty one, for her face was thin, her nose beaky, and her complexion chill and pale, but she was impressive-looking, for all that.

When mother and she had poured out their hearts to each other, we were all brought in to make her acquaintance, and to me, at any rate, the ordeal was very trying. She did not kiss us, or even shake hands with us, she just scrutinised us the one after the other, her curiosity visibly tinged with aversion.

"A goodly quiverful, Millie," she said, with a faint, slow smile; but when Marion appeared, bringing up the rear, her whole face softened.

"A Hurst," she said, and offered her cheek for Marion to kiss.

Aunt Hilda stopped at the hotel in the village that night; and next day we learned that she was going to take Marion to live with her.

We were all much awed by the tidings, and Marion herself was half dismayed and half delighted.

"It is a splendid opportunity for her," mother said with tears in her soft eyes; "and, beautiful as she is, her destiny may be a grand one."

So that was the first thing Marion's face brought her—Aunt Hilda's favour, and the chance of a grand destiny.

For five years after she left us we never saw Marion, though we heard from her regularly.

With us life went on quietly, but less sadly than more prosperous people would suppose. The boys, who came next to me, were growing up and promising well, and the younger girls were learning to be helpful. Then a new Rector had come in place of the old one, and he was kind to father and friendly with the whole of us. He was a youngish man, and a bachelor; pleasant to look at, and pleasanter still to talk to; and, though our parlour was a sadly shabby apartment, I liked it on winter evenings when the lamp was lighted and the curtains drawn, and when Mr. Drew sat beside the hearth discoursing with father.

I am sure father and mother had missed Marion much at first; but, as time passed, they learned gradually to do without her. But when Aunt Hilda wrote that she was going to be married—to make a very satisfactory marriage, Aunt Hilda said—they looked at each other with a sudden sense of approaching loss. She was their own beautiful daughter, but a woman now, and quite done with them and their narrow, common-place life.

Of course, in my eyes, Marion's future wore an entirely different aspect. To belong to the great world that I had heard of vaguely, to be a fashionable woman, rich and perhaps titled, what could be more glorious? Fate certainly had been kind to Marion in that she had attained to all that life could offer, so young.

I was thinking this as we sat all together one evening in the winter time. It was a Saturday, a day on which Mr. Drew never visited us, and the day therefore that we reserved for all our homeliest duties.

Tea was over, and the youngest children had gone to bed, and father was sitting in

the tired attitude habitual with him on Saturday evenings; and George and Chrissie were disputing in a low voice so as not to disturb him; and mother and I had the big stocking-basket between us; and the room was quiet with the repressed quietness peculiar to full houses; when suddenly we heard a vehicle crunch over the gravel—drive up to the door, and a firm hand sound a vigorous rat-tat-tat with the thin knocker.

"Dear me!" father said, sitting erect and rubbing his eyes, "who can that be?"

"You had better open the door, Lucy," mother said, bundling the unfinished stockings together, and popping the basket under the table.

I smoothed the bits of wool off my apron, turned the lamp higher in our shabby old hall, and opened the door, and there, under the falling snow, was my beautiful sister.

As she came into our shabby parlour and stood among us, she looked like a great figure that a master hand had painted into a poor picture.

"You have come to pay us a long visit, I hope," father said, looking at her with such fond, proud eyes.

"Yes, dearest, a long, long visit." She put out her hand to him in a petting, protective way, that was charming from her, that would have been ridiculous from me, though I might have meant it just as tenderly. "Indeed, I am not sure that I have not come home for good."

"For good?" father and mother echoed rather blankly.

"Yes; now don't say you are sorry," bending over mother, and kissing her as she spoke. "Aunt Hilda and I have quarrelled. You remember she said I was a real Hurst, so I suppose I have the Hurst bad temper and obstinacy, and she did not like that so well."

"And we had thought you were so happy."

"Oh, so I was! Aunt Hilda was kind in many ways; but it is impossible not to quarrel with her sometimes."

"And the man you are to marry—will he not mind?"

"Well, as he is the man I am not to marry it is not of any consequence, whether he does or not."

"But your aunt wrote as if everything were settled."

"Yes, that is Aunt Hilda's way. She wished it, and of course it never occurred to her that my inclination might be an

obstacle. For my part I never thought of the man, being proud of the right I have inherited from my mother to please myself."

"That is every woman's right," mother said, drawing herself up a little, "and we are thankful you have been true to yourself."

That was all that was said on the subject then; if Marion told the details of her parting from Aunt Hilda later, I did not hear them.

When a girl like Marion comes back, after years of absence, to a home like ours, she is certain to make a material difference to everyone in it one way or another.

At first we were all afraid of her, and ashamed of our poverty before her just as if she had been a stranger. But that wore off by degrees, as, in a number of indescribable ways, she made life better for the whole of us. For one thing it was a joy to look at her; to hear her voice; to see her smile. And then, she was always so bright, so helpful, so independent. If she regretted the fleshpots of Egypt, as represented by Aunt Hilda, she never said so; and where I should have sat down sometimes to grumble, she bent her mind to see if the cause for grumbling might not be lessened.

Mother pitied Marion for a time, because of what she had voluntarily abandoned, as she had never pitied herself; but by degrees that feeling gave way to contentment in her presence.

Of course, people cannot become cheerful to order; but if they could, what a blessing it would prove to those who live with them! I don't think any of us ever realised that we had much to be thankful for till Marion was back with us.

But it was easy for Marian to see the bright side of life, with a face that was a passport to all hearts. "Who would not be good that was so lovely?" I said to mother one day; and she answered that Marion's soul showed itself on her face.

To think people good because they are beautiful is an old, old delusion; not that I mean that in any mean or censorious way, for Marion was good also; I only mean that it was easier to detect the good in her because she was so beautiful.

At first she had been rather in the habit of making fun of Mr. Drew, calling him the rosy Rector behind his back, and feigning huge interest in all his hobbies when he was present; but after she had heard of the many instances in which he

had been kind to father her demeanour altered; she always spoke of him gratefully, and listened to his opinions with less assumption of deference, but with more genuine interest. Of course, she did not mean anything but to be kind, because she thought him kind; and she was hardly to blame that he mistook her meaning and learned to love her.

I saw how things were going well enough, but breaking my heart over it secretly did not mend matters. It was all quite natural and reasonable. How could any one think of me when Marion was by? And yet I don't think I made the fact any more palatable by asking myself that question.

When mother was told that Marion had refused Mr. Drew, she was very sorry. "If it had only been Lucy," she said, "I think he would have made Lucy happy;" but being sorry did not affect the circumstances.

To Marion I am sure it seemed pitiful that she should come in the panoply of her triumphant beauty to wage such unequal war with her poor little rustic sister, and rob her of her solitary admirer. I know she was as deeply penitent for what had occurred as though her misdoing had been intentional, and her resolve to make amends to me in some vague way, for an unconscious wrong, dated from the hour when she knew that Mr. Drew had been interested in me before she came.

She had been six months at Mudford, and still Aunt Hilda made no sign, entrenching herself behind the Hurst pride and obstinacy, and waiting for the other side to capitulate.

But Marion was a Hurst, too; and, when Aunt Hilda had waited till she was weary, she remembered that and yielded. Just as she had done on the occasion of her first visit, she pounced down upon us unexpectedly, and asked Marion to forgive and forget.

Marion was touched at sight of her; touched most of all by the fact that it was Aunt Hilda who sought her pardon; and she fell on her neck, and wept over her, and said she also was to blame.

Things brightened up after that, and the two jested over their quarrel and made light of it; and then Aunt Hilda asked how soon Marion would be ready to go back with her.

"I cannot go back, dear Aunt Hilda," Marion answered gently.

"And why not, pray?"

"Because this is my home."

"Fiddlesticks," Aunt Hilda said; though

I am sure no one could have expected such an expression from her. "What opportunities have you here?"

"There are other things to think of besides opportunities."

"Your father and mother are not selfish enough to wish to keep you hidden in a hole like this."

"But I hope I am not selfish enough to leave them. Ask them if they are not happier for having me at home."

"Don't be ridiculous. Parents must consider their children's welfare."

"And children, when they have arrived at years of discretion, are bound to consider their parents' advantage."

"Then you will leave me alone, me who have no one."

"I am not your only niece; there is Lucy. To take her with you would be kind, and she is very amiable."

"That little dowdy!"

"Lucy is a very sweet girl, Aunt Hilda; you would find her much more tractable than you ever found me."

"That may be, but I shall not try the experiment. If you do not choose to come back with me I can live alone, as I did before."

"I cannot go back, Aunt Hilda."

"I suppose it is all on account of that fellow——"

"There are some things even you must not speak of," Marion said, the proud Hurst blood flaming in her cheeks, and for the moment Aunt Hilda was silenced.

But she remained for lunch, and at lunch she surveyed me critically, condescendingly admitted that I had improved; and before she left offered me a chill invitation to pay her a visit.

Mother was very pleased. I think adversity had weakened her character, she seemed so terribly anxious to keep in with the only one of her relatives who had manifested friendliness towards her. To everything Aunt Hilda did she imputed the noblest motives; while it must be candidly admitted that sometimes it needed a good deal of imagination to detect the nobility. For instance, she must have known how much a trifling present would have simplified the efforts attendant on my going to visit her; but she never volunteered it, or made any reference thereto, except in saying coldly to Marion, "You know what dresses she will require."

"Never mind," Marion said to me when we were alone, "we shall manage without her money."

I hated to take Marion's things from her, for they were all so beautiful, and suited her so well, and I think she had a certain womanly pleasure in being always well dressed; but what could I do? Aunt Hilda had invited me, and everyone said I must go to her, and there was no other way of giving me an outfit. Of course, I protested continually, but Marion was firmly insistent.

"I do not need dinner dresses and tea gowns at Mudford," she said; "besides, Aunt Hilda will like you better for being presentable."

"I don't think I shall go to Aunt Hilda," I said several times. "What is the good of going? She will make me uncomfortable, and she will never like me, because I am not a Hurst."

"When things are good for us we must swallow them, no matter how they are flavoured; and it is good for you to go to Aunt Hilda, and be introduced to society, and see what ladies and gentlemen are like," Marion said, smiling.

"I think there are very good ladies and gentlemen at Mudford," I answered jealously.

"Of course there are; but there are more in London," Marion said demurely, as she went on trimming my hat.

I looked very well when I was finally prepared for my journey—very well for me, I mean—and Aunt Hilda unbent a little when she saw me, and told me again that I had improved.

Aunt Hilda's house was not at all what I had expected. It was small and gloomy, and many things in it were worn and shabby; but it must have been the right style of house, or Aunt Hilda would not have had it; and knowing that, I kept my observations to myself, and enjoyed what was nice with all my heart.

The servants were quite a revelation to me, with their silent, respectful ways, and their trim and spotless clothing; and to have my hair dressed by Aunt Hilda's maid, and to be taken to the theatre in Aunt Hilda's neat little brougham, filled me with ecstasy. No doubt there was a good deal of snobbishness in my satisfaction because I dined at eight o'clock, and had a man-servant to hand me things; but we cannot help being as Nature has moulded us, and it was not my fault that Nature, which had made Marion a Hurst, had made me only a snob.

Of course life with Aunt Hilda was not one of unalloyed joy at the first. Often and



often I was homesick, and longed from the depths of my heart for the crowded house and the noisy demonstrative love of the young ones at home. But after a time I outgrew that, and when my pleasures and the occupations provided for me had begun to absorb me, I grew to shudder a little at the recollection of the life I had left behind.

"How could Marion go back to it?" I asked myself a hundred times, and the question always remained unanswered. To have been offered life with Aunt Hilda, and to have voluntarily and cheerfully chosen the other, was incomprehensible to me.

### A BELGIAN CHRISTMAS EVE.

"TEN minutes too late, Monsieur!" said the porter, with a shrug and a smile that was meant to be consolatory, as I alighted in front of the great railway station, merely to hear that the train which should have wafted me seawards and Londonwards had started without me. It was vexatious; but there was no help for it. There was an evening train by which I could travel, and so, leaving my luggage in the cloak-room at the station, I drove back to my former comfortable quarters in the hotel which I had lately left. It was pleasantly situated, that hotel, overlooking one of those broad boulevards that are the pride of that old Belgian city—a city of gardens, and parks, and open spaces that keep it bright and healthy, if less quaintly picturesque than some others of the great towns of the Low Countries.

The day was fine, clear, and frosty, but the winter sun shone cheerily on the tall elms, leafless now, of the boulevard upon which I gazed, musing over recollections of former Christmas Eves, such as this was, very variously spent in different quarters of the world. Presently my practised ear caught the approaching sound of military music, slowly played, and next the unmistakeable roll of muffled drums, the heavy tread of marching feet, and the clank of accoutrements.

"An officer's funeral!" I thought, and the conjecture was confirmed as an advanced guard, with reversed arms, came in sight, and halted in front of a large white house, next door to the hotel. I now observed, for the first time, that the wide portecochère of this mansion was open and the door-posts and lintel draped with hangings of black edged with silver, while in front

of the entrance stood a hearse, drawn by four sleek, black horses, whose trappings of black velvet were trimmed with silver, too. Of silver also were the four huge lamps, lighted now, and blinking, like yellow eyes, at the pale sunshine of the short winter's day, which decked the angles of the roof, while in front towered a tall silver cross. The great Flanders horses, as if proud of their caparisons, pawed the pavement impatiently, bringing a shower of sparks at every hoof-stroke, and seemed eager for the start.

"The millinery and upholstery of mourning ceremonial," said I to myself, "are much the same all the world over. Your undertaker has a gainful trade, no doubt. But what have we here?"—as a slender young fellow, in a court suit splendid with embroidery, wearing a sword and carrying a cocked hat under his arm, tripped out of the house and gave orders to the black-coated satellites who stood beside the equipage, with the tone and manner of one accustomed to be obeyed. And then I remembered that foreign funerals of the more expensive sort require, by tradition, the presence of some such functionary, who directs the proceedings, and who is styled an usher. The make-up, in a theatrical sense, of this individual usher was faultless, and he was evidently impressed, himself, by a sense of the weight and dignity of the part which he had to play, as Deputy Grand Marshal of the Palace at the Court of King Death. He wore his gold-hilted sword as gracefully as if a rapier had dangled gaily at his side since his boyhood; his costume was perfect, from the lace ruffles that almost hid his small hands to the buckled shoes whose varnished leather encased his dapper feet; and the pearly whiteness of his silk stockings was unmarred by speck or crease, as he moved to and fro, gesticulating, finding fault, waving his wand of ebony as if it had been the bâton of the leader of an orchestra.

Never was there a critic so hard to satisfy as this active young master of the ceremonies. Again and again he skipped out into the roadway, at imminent risk of being crushed by some jolting drag or fast-trotting tandem returning from the afternoon promenade in the Bois, to take an artistic survey of the hearse and its decorations; and each time he insisted on some change in the position of the costly frippery that bedecked it. Presently there were carried forth several gigantic wreaths of those Parma violets, of which Nice sends so

many cargoes from her sun-kissed gardens to the bleaker North, and then the usher became almost frantic with excitement. He would confide the arrangement of these monstrous garlands to no meaner hands than his; nor was he easy to please, even with his own skill, in massing the rich luxuriance of the flowers.

Around each of the big silver lamps, blazing in defiance of the daylight, a wreath was hung; three more were on the roof; three within the hearse, where the vacant space seemed to await the coffin. I say "seemed" advisedly, for, if ever there was a four-wheeled impostor, brought out from its dismal coach-house for ostentation alone, it was that same hearse. But the usher was in his glory, now by the aid of a step-ladder scaling the roof to shift the places of the wreaths; now diving in between the heavy curtains of the mortuary car, like a showman anxious to get his puppets ready for the coming show; hurrying in tip-toe haste; capering; scolding; but always with a face the intense seriousness of which was clearly single-minded and earnest. Then came a pause, and then the heavy tread of men trained to keep step, but walking now with somewhat of a shuffling gait, by reason of the burden they had to bear. That burden was the coffin, covered with a rich pall, worked in gold, with coronets and heraldic bearings, and carried by soldiers.

Solemnly the usher skipped forward, almost staggering under the weight of three colossal violet wreaths, and these he proceeded to place upon the coffin, so that one floral crown should overlap another; and, being at last satisfied with the display, he waved his hand aloft, and immediately the music struck up, and the procession began to move. It had to pass in front of the hotel, so that all the actors and accessories of the dismal show glided, with slow steps and frequent halts, past my window. First went the escort; then the band; and next the coffin with its martial bearers, while beside it was led the charger, covered with a huge veil of crape, through which could be seen the holsters and the sword dangling at the saddle-bow, which its dead master would never mount again. Two and two, and bareheaded, came the mourners, on foot, and apparently indifferent to the chill of the frosty air; men of wealth and station, as I guessed, and with whom were mingled a number of officers of the garrison in varied uniforms. Far and wide rang out the dirge of the

music; the empty hearse, with its nodding cross and blazing lamps, was followed by a long line of coronetted carriages, the owners of which, doubtless, walked in front, and which were tenantless too; and then came on the rearguard with reversed arms, slowly marching on their way to the taper-lighted church and the distant cemetery.

The funeral had not long gone by, before I became conscious of a certain stir and bustle in the street below, which evidently portended some important event. Spectators, market women, workmen, and bloused peasants, homeward-bound with baskets emptied of the eggs, and chickens, and shapeless lumps of yellow butter, began to congregate, mingling with some score or so of that minor bourgeoisie that lives frugally on its modest income, and, having overmuch leisure, is greedy for a sight of any street spectacle. There were idle troopers, too, belonging to the cavalry, whose trumpets rang out shrilly, ever and anon, from the barracks hard by; while a milk-woman on her rounds, with glistening brass cans in the little green cart that her sturdy mastiff, with his brass-studded harness and red worsted tassels, drew so easily, forgot her customers as she secured for herself a place in the foremost rank. Then children suddenly appeared, basket-laden, strawing the street with flowers and cut fragments of coloured paper, until the rough paving-stones all but disappeared beneath an irregular mosaic of red and white, green and blue. The bells of neighbouring churches sent forth, with common accord, a joyous peal, which was echoed by those of a monastery on the farther side of my hotel, and through the gate of which I had often seen the poor—such beggars as Sterne depicted—going in for their daily dole of bread and soup. From afar came the boom and clang of music, blended with the deep, rich notes of the chanting, as the head of the procession came in sight.

It was difficult to believe that the town could have contained so many girls— young, well dressed, and pretty—as had been by ecclesiastical influence or by social considerations, induced to walk in that procession. They were of all ages, from the lisping child ill at ease in her stiffly-starched frock and white shoes, to the tall maiden, carrying a heavy flag with the air of a Joan of Arc; but there they were, squadrons of girls in white; bevvies of girls in blue; companies of girls in pink, or lilac, or maize colour; but all either actually bearing some

emblem or badge, or feigning to assist the progress of some shrine, or reliquary, or colossal crucifix, or group of images, by grasping the end of one of the hundreds of bright ribbons that were attached to these, the central features and rallying points of the show. On, on they streamed, walking demurely to the music of bassoon and serpent, cornet and drum, of clashing cymbal and piping clarionet, while the musicians, collected from many a parish of the city and suburbs, beat and blew their best. Anon the music was hushed, and nothing broke the silence, save the deep voices of the chanting priests, and then arose the shrill singing of many children, as school after school, well drilled, and officered by nuns or friars, as the case might be, marched on to swell the apparently interminable array.

A marvellous effect was there of colour and grouping artistically arranged, and a rare display too, of treasures ecclesiastic that seldom see the light of day. There is nothing now in the market, were an Empress the bidder, to equal that old point-lace just drawn forth from the oaken chest in which it usually reposes, and which was the pious work of supple fingers that have crumbled to dust two centuries ago. Where can you find such goldsmith's work as yonder casket, that in bygone ages was consecrated as the receptacle of some wonder-working relic; or see such a triumph of art as that jewelled chalice, the *répoussé* work of which was surely wrought by fairy hammers, so light and delicate is the tracery?

Those who take a share in the procession seem to have an all-engrossing interest in their task, which makes them for the moment deaf and blind to all that has not reference to the business of the hour. The youngest prattler who has been entrusted with a miniature silken pennon, whereon some sacred motto has been worked in gold or silver, is as earnestly devoted to the duty as are those two stalwart men, who have quite enough to do as they support, by its double poles, a heavy parochial banner of purple velvet and gleaming bullion, or yonder band of damsels in white, with flowing veils, tall and fair as so many lilies, who cluster round the gilded shrine, within which glimpses can be caught of the gorgeously-attired images within.

On, and still onwards, like a shining river bathed in multi-coloured light, flows the apparently endless stream of the great

procession, pausing, sometimes, when the sound of chanting voices is alone heard; and soon, at the tinkling signal of a silver bell, resuming its slow stateliness of march. The route already traversed must have been long; the keen air, as the day begins to die, grows sharper still; but no one of the many actors, old or young, in this outdoor panorama, appears to suffer from fatigue or cold: the whole pageant passes on with the steady regularity of a machine. As a pictorial effect the thing was admirable. The eye became, as it were, surfeited with rich hues, with azure and carnation, and purple and green; it was relieved by pure white, set off by the glitter of gold and gems. No such success could have been achieved save by traditional skill, passed on from age to age, and linking this nineteenth century of ours to a very remote past indeed, when this very pageantry belonged to a faith long since dead; and it was in praise of the divinities of half-forgotten Olympus, that hymns were sung, and flowers twined, and cars adorned with gold leaf and plumes and fluttering silk. Be sure that it was a gallant show, too, in that old time, when Jupiter Optimus Maximus was worshipped in Rome's Capitol, or when the more popular rites were performed for the sake of Ceres, or Venus, or Dian of the Silver Bow. And young children and maidens swelled the bright throng then, even as now, and there were song, and sparkle, and the sound of instruments that would be strange to our ears, but which made music welcome enough to the ear then, as the white bull, wreathed with roses, and with gilded horns, was led slowly through the narrow streets amidst the shouting crowd.

On, and onwards still, as if the whole feminine population of the kingdom—between the age of seven, say, and that of seven and twenty—had been pressed into the service, swept the procession. Fresh bands of music; new companies of chanting-priests, of deep-voiced deacons, whose scarlet robes were all but hidden by costly lace, awakened the echoes of the quiet streets. Chariots with bleeding hearts conspicuously borne aloft; chariots with gigantic crucifixes; chariots resplendent as the noonday sun with the lavish display of cloth of silver, and cloth of gold, and tenanted by venerated images; went lumbering by.

And still the children sang, and the diapason of the chanting rolled out like solemn thunder on the air, while at every

instant some novel feature of the ever-varying spectacle claimed its meed of praise. Prettiest, perhaps, of all the sights there was a little—a very little—child, a beautiful boy with golden curls, fantastically clad in raiment of camel's hair, and who carried a tiny cross, and led by a blue ribbon a white lamb, highly trained, no doubt, since it followed with perfect docility and exemplary meekness. A more charming model of innocent infancy than this youthful representative of John the Baptist, as with filleted head, small limbs seemingly bare, and blue eyes that never wandered to the right or left, he slowly stepped on, none of the great Italian masters ever drew. On, still on, over the flower-strewed pavement flowed the living stream, fit successor to processions of the far past, when beauty, and faith, and splendour, long since vanished like the hoar frost from the hawthorn boughs, paraded the old streets of this very town.

The spectators, I noticed, behaved very variously. There were "esprits forts" clearly among the bourgeois looking on, who seemed coldly indifferent to what they saw, if not actually hostile, and who declined to doff their hats as the holiest images and the most hallowed emblems were borne by. But the peasants, one and all, bared their heads in reverence; and the milk-woman, with her cart and her cans, had pulled her rosary, with its dark berries and brass medals, out of her capacious pocket, and was telling her beads as devoutly as her own great grandmother could have done. Forward, with the same steady pace, poured the tide of the procession, to all appearance regardless of the crowd or of the gazers who filled the windows of the houses that lined the route.

Some rivalry there may possibly have been between the different parishes which had sent forth their boys and girls, their bands and flags, and the jealously guarded treasures from crypt, and chancel, and sacristy to swell the pomp. Saint Jossé, with its famed old church, to which pilgrims resort even from the banks of Loire and Rhine, could not permit itself to be outshone by fashionable Saint Jacques, where it is easy for a bland abbé, who knows the world of the salons, to collect subscriptions that are less missed by the givers than a lost bet on the races, or a luckless stake at baccarat. And Saint Ursula, grim patroness of a network of ancient streets, where aristocratic mansions of the mediæval type are elbowed by mean shops and huck-

sters' stalls, yet tries to avoid the disgrace of being overcrowded by moneyed, pushing, parvenu All Saints, where tall new houses, radiant with terra-cotta and plate glass, shelter the rich proprietors of the still taller brick chimneys that dominate a mass of workmen's dwellings on the outskirts of the parish. But such a spirit of emulation only serves to enhance the glitter of the show.

And now the clashing cymbals, and the boom and bray of the brass instruments, lately at their loudest, are hushed, that the rich thunder of the chanting may be the better heard, and the spectators press forward, or stand on tip-toe, to peer over the shoulders of those in the foremost rank. Something was plainly to be looked for that was regarded as the central pivot, or kernel, of the show. And here it comes. Surrounded by chanting priests, and preceded by scarlet-capped and white-robed acolytes swinging weighty censers, under his canopy of state borne over his head by four strong men, some dignitary of the Church goes by. He wears no mitre—not even that of a Bishop "in partibus infidelium"—and, therefore, I conjecture him to be a Dean. He is, at any rate, splendid as jewels, and gold embroidery, and antique lace can make him; and he walks beneath his gorgeous baldaquin of gold and purple, chanting, too, but in a thin end reedy voice, for he is old, and his hair, silver white, contrasts somewhat plaintively with the magnificence that environs him, as amidst clouds of steaming incense he totters on. The bystanders begin to disperse, for it is getting late and cold, and the shadows are beginning to creep from darkling nooks and corners, and the spectacle is over. The procession is out of sight, and fainter and fainter grow the sounds of the music and of the chanting. The last spectator to depart was a young monk, with a pale face and dreamy eyes, clad in the brown robes of his Order, and with his tonsured head bare, who, during all this time, had knelt on the cold stones at the monastery gate, his lips moving as his lean fingers grasped his rosary, and an expression of rapt devotion on his wan countenance, that would have done credit to some hermit saint of a thousand years ago, when the crown of martyrdom was easy to find.

"Monsieur est servi en bas," said, in a German accent, the Teutonic waiter, who interrupted my reverie. It was time for my early dinner, and then for the drive to the station; but I have never regretted



that I missed the earlier train, and ever remembered with pleasure that special Christmas Eve in Belgium.

## A DATELESS BARGAIN.

By C. L. PIRKIS,

*Author of "Lady Lovelace," etc.*

### CHAPTER LIII.

THERE came one awful day, the like of which no one of those hardy fisher-folk could recall. It seemed as if all the winds of heaven had combined to pour their fury upon the rock in one ceaseless, roaring blast. The great sea was lashed into frothy hillocks; sheep were blown off the headlands into the Sound; the women and children prudently kept within doors lest they might share a similar fate; the men drew their boats high up on the beach in sheltered nooks. The gale brought the fog in great rolling masses from the ocean; brought it in, swept it out again, and brought it in once more. Never since Frank had set foot on the island had he felt himself so stifled and oppressed by the fog. It was like being packed in a box filled with feathers. He began to ask all sorts of questions as to the possible risks boats would run on the open sea that night. Were shipwrecks of frequent occurrence on the coast? How far out would the beacon on the Monk Rock be seen? Would it lose half its radiance, or would the fog quench it altogether?

He got, in reply to his questions, a longer list of casualties than he expected. One man counted on the fingers of his hands eight shipwrecks he could remember, within sight of the Faroes, in less than half that number of years. Another began the narration, in glowing language, of a fog and wind-storm he could recall, when the beacon on the Monk Rock had not been visible a hundred yards out, and a big ship had struck upon the sunken pinnacle, and all hands had perished.

Frank, of necessity, lost many of the details of the terrible incident through his ignorance of the Danish tongue; but he understood enough to set him shivering, and to send him questioning the younger Christian as to what means of fog-signalling (if any) the Faroese had at command.

The man's reply was to the effect that none, so far as he knew, had ever been in use on the islands; that an imperfect method of signalling, such as horn-blowing

or gun-firing on the beach, would be as likely to do harm as good, the fog, it was well known, frequently making the sound to appear to come from an opposite direction. But he had unbounded faith in the beacon. The fog, too, might lift before night—why not? One could only hope for the best. He had lived through fog and wind in his little fishing smack in the open sea before now. Others might have equal good luck—why not?

But Frank had, somehow, in these days, lost his faith in good luck. He found it far easier to say to himself, "This is a direful day; there's ill-luck in that wind and fog for me, as well as for the poor souls who have to face it," than to say a prayer for those at sea, and turn in an hour or so earlier to shorten the dismal black hours of the night, as he had done many a time of late.

In the morning he had contrived, by keeping close under the shelter of the overhanging rocks, to get down to the beach, and had come away awe-stricken with the sense of the incapacity of man when once the wild forces of Nature, uncurbed and unbridled, are let loose on him. Towards evening, however, although the fog had thinned somewhat, going down to the beach had become an impossibility. The sea had come rushing up the thoroughfares that led down to the coast, and showed beneath the windows of the little huts an angry torrent of white foam. The path over the rocks to the light-tower still stood high and dry, but Frank noted that young Christian equipped himself in his waterproof overalls for the night-watch a full two hours earlier than usual, and that a good-sized basket of provisions was packed for him to take with him. It was not difficult to understand that he was facing the possibility of being cut off for a time from the little colony. Frank was on the alert to accompany him without delay.

"It will be my turn on duty to-morrow," he said to the man. "I had better take my chance of getting to the tower while I can."

So with lanterns and provisions the two men set off for the dismal night-watch, old Christian, from his fireside corner, nodding a sleepy approval to them between his fits of wheezing.

The pent-up coldness of the lighthouse seemed to meet and strike them on cheek and lip as they entered. Naturally, the light was their first thought. That attended to, they wrapped their rugs and

cloaks about them, and made as big a fire as due regard to the quantity of peat fuel stored would allow.

Young Christian stroked his straw-coloured beard, and made one or two monosyllabic exclamations, to which Frank replied by brief nods. Then the man lighted a pipe, drew a chair into a warm corner, crossed his legs, and indulged either in a brief snooze, or in meditation of a somnolent character.

As for Frank, chair, pipe, or meditation was alike impossible to him. Had the room been long enough to admit a backward and forward march, the chances were he would have got through close upon thirty miles that night. Young Christian suggested to him once that, as it would be his turn on duty to-morrow night, it would be as well for him to get as much rest as he could that night. Frank scouted the idea.

Even a brief half-hour of sleep seemed to him an impossibility, with that uproar of furious wind and wave without, and that turmoil of hideous apprehension within.

Every blast of roaring wind that beat against their tower, every dash of wild waves against the rock, seemed to come laden with ten thousand voices more terrible than their own.

Would the gale never die of its own fury? Would the blessed daylight never come and the dreary watch be over? It seemed to have lasted a decade of years already. Frank pulled out his watch. The hands pointed to half-past four. Why, then, another two hours at least must elapse before they could hope for the faintest streak of dawn to do battle with this inky fog!

With something of a groan he sank down on the floor beside the peat fire, supporting himself on one elbow and shielding his eyes from the smoke. An open boat on the wildest sea, he felt, would be paradise itself compared with the torture of this forced inaction.

#### CHAPTER LIV.

HE might have fallen asleep, perhaps; or, perhaps, there had come a lull to the turmoil of his thoughts, and, by contrast, it seemed unconsciousness.

A dull sudden boom broke across the temporary calm, and sent him to his feet with a start.

What was it? A crash, telling of some havoc wrought by the still furiously blowing gale; or was it a more awful sound

still—a signal of distress from some foundering vessel?

Young Christian had sprung to his feet at the same moment.

"What was that?" one asked the other, each feeling that he held the answer in his own heart, and that, perhaps, at that moment some score or so of poor souls were going to their graves amid the terrors of the storm.

Frank went to the look-out window in the tower, peering out into the gloom; or, rather, trying to, for nought met his gaze save the "blackness of darkness" everywhere; the black, leaping waves showing like so many inky shadows springing from a Stygian gulf as far as they dared into the world above.

"We must get a boat; we must do something," he cried desperately.

The other shook his head.

"We have no lifeboat—no boat but a lifeboat could live in that sea."

"They may be near enough for us to fire a line into them with one of your fowling-pieces, and so get a rope from them. We may do something with a rope," cried Frank, making his way rapidly down the ladder-staircase into the room below, where lamps, string, and fowling-pieces were stored.

Young Christian followed him. "That gun was fired far out at sea," he said.

"The fog muffles sound," said Frank, busy lighting the strongest hand-lamp they had in store.

"It muffles sound, and also makes it seem to come from another quarter. Now, would you say that gun came from north, south, east, or west?" said the other.

"They'll fire again—we shall tell better next time," answered Frank, opening the door and making his way out upon the rock, lamp in hand.

But, for all the use it was, he might just as well have left the lamp behind him. A dense wall of fog barred them in; over the darkness came the roaring of the north-easter, bringing with it the rush and swirl of the waters which swamped the thoroughfares running inland.

At the peril of their lives they ran along the edge of the rock, in the teeth of the driving gale. They fired fowling-piece after fowling-piece into the black fog, hoping for an answering gun to show that their signals were heard.

But though they waited out there in the cutting blast with straining ears for an hour or more, never an answering gun came athwart the racket of wind and wave.

"Heaven help them, whoever they are," said Frank, firing his last shot into the air, "they are beyond our help now."

## CHAPTER LV.

OUT on the broad Atlantic, the little ship "Frea" had done brave battle with the tempest. She had got well away from the Scotch coast, had steamed past the Shetland Isles, and was almost in sight of the Faroes, when the storm had broken forth in its full fury. It had snapped the mast as though it were a willow wand, torn its one sail into ribbons, and swept it away like a handful of dust.

The little vessel had lumbered heavily from side to side, rolling like a log in the deep troughs of the sea.

Uncle Archie grew apprehensive.

"It's her way of doing things; she's like some people, you know—takes life heavily, but she's none the less to be relied on," said the Captain cheerily, jealous for the honour of his little craft.

But later on in the day as the gale, instead of abating, steadily increased in strength, he grew less cheery, and his voice was only heard giving short, sharp orders to his crew.

Once, towards midnight, Uncle Archie thought he heard the words "driven out of our course—we must go wherever the wind takes us now;" but the deafening turmoil wind and wave kept up prevented his being certain.

Towards daybreak matters grew worse. The sky was wild, the rain came down in buckets. Big seas broke over the deck, rushing down the hatchway into the cabin where Joyce had been bidden to remain. The lifeboat hanging in the davits was swept away, and worse fate of all, the skylight of the engine-room was smashed at the same moment by the fury of the blast.

After this all was consternation, though, thanks to the good seamanship of the Captain and crew, there was no confusion. The engineer came up reporting that the fires were out, and that they were up to their middle in water below; another man rushed forward crying that the ship was filling through the openings in the deck.

The signal gun was at once fired, in case help was to be had from some passing vessel. Then there came the hurried order to man the remaining boat. Joyce heard her name called desperately by Uncle Archie, and rushing up from the cabin found herself caught in someone's arm and lifted into the boat where some four or five

sailors were already seated. Uncle Archie and Morton took their places beside her, the boat was lowered rapidly though cautiously, the remainder of the crew leaped in from the mizen chains, followed last of all by the Captain.

All was hurry, confusion, and bewilderment to Joyce. From the time that the order to man the boat had been given to the time when the men with their oars pressed the boat off from the sides of the sinking steamer, only about five minutes had elapsed. In that five minutes they had been nearer death than ever they had been in their lives before.

They realised this as, carried away on the crest of a mountainous wave, they turned to give a farewell look to the battered steamer. She lay on her side now, the black line of her hull showed for one moment between the masses of madly-dashing waves; the next the black line was altogether gone, the funnel only showing dark between the white, foaming spray. Another big wave carried the little boat onward; when they lifted their eyes next not a vestige of the "Frea" was to be seen.

After gratitude for their own present safety, came the anxious thought if the big boat had been unable to live through the gale, what about the little boat?

In good truth their danger was not fanciful. Out there in the open sea they had not the fog that begirt the Faroes—that began where the waters of the Gulf Stream met the colder waters of the ocean—but it was pitch-dark; there were neither stars nor moon; the wind was furious; and every moment the big seas sweeping down upon them threatened to engulf them.

Without excellent seamanship the little boat could not have lived in that sea for twenty minutes. But excellent seamanship they had. The Captain had a cool, clear head, every one of the sailors was an "old salt," and knew well enough what he was about.

The Captain took his place at the helm, giving his orders distinctly. The men were to row in spells, and those who did not row were to bale out the water, which threatened every moment to swamp them. This was by no means light work, only one baler had been thrown into the boat on starting, and hats and caps had to be called into requisition. It was bitterly cold, the wind was piercing, hands and arms speedily grew benumbed and chill. After all, the rowing seemed the lighter work of the two. Morton worked away at the baling briskly and bravely, rolling up his

shirt sleeves to the elbow, making a scarlet pocket-handkerchief do duty for his fur cap, and earning such high encomiums from the Captain that the worthy man began to think that after all he had mistaken his vocation and would have made a better sailor than detective. Poor old Uncle Archie did his best, but his limbs were stiff, and it was quickly evident that his task told upon him.

"Someone must keep a look-out for the big waves with the white crests," said the Captain, looking at the old man. So he volunteered for the duty, sitting back to back with the others, and Joyce, taking from his hand the baler he had in use, possibly found the work lighter than he had done.

So they tossed about in the dark, at the mercy of wind and wave. Where they were they knew not. They only knew they were being driven before a strong north-easter, it might be towards the coast of Iceland, it might be towards the dangerous Shetland shoals. Their only safety they knew lay in keeping to the open sea. To be dashed upon the shore in that gale could mean but one thing for them all. Perhaps when daylight broke, they might sight a sail or find themselves in happy proximity to land. If not, Heaven help them, with not so much as a flask of fresh water among them nor tin of hard biscuit.

A sailor in the darkness asked if anyone had an idea of the time. The Captain pulled out his watch. Joyce thought it must be close upon day-dawn—that darkest hour she knew so well.

It was too dark to see the face of the watch; but, feeling for the hands, the Captain said he thought it must be between five and six.

Suddenly Joyce dropped her baler, leaning back silently against Uncle Archie's shoulder.

"Poor child, poor child!" he said pityingly, "you are worn out—shivering—wet through and through."

Even as he spoke the back-water of a big wave, whose full force they had backed to escape, came over them, a great furious shower drenching them to the skin.

For a few minutes the work of baling went on silently and vigorously, Joyce doing her best with the others.

Then she leaned back heavily upon Uncle Archie, again whispering to him over his shoulder: "Uncle Archie, tell me, do you see anything?"

"Anything? A light or boat, do you

mean? I wish to Heaven I could!" moaned the old man; "but beyond the black outline of the big mountains of waves I can see nothing."

"Nothing!"

"Do you mean the phosphorescence on the sea, Joyce? I can see that thankfully enough, for where we should be without it in this inky darkness I'm sure I don't know."

"Only that?"

Uncle Archie thought a moment. Joyce might have another meaning. His voice dropped as he answered.

"Do you mean the last pitiful sight we saw, child? The waves leaping and dashing over our poor little steamer as it rolled over and disappeared in the darkness? Ah! I shall see that sight with my eyes open or shut to the last day of my life."

Joyce said no more. She was still leaning heavily against Uncle Archie's shoulder. He could feel the full throbbing of her heart, the deep drawing of her breath.

He began to grow alarmed. Was she giving way at last? After all these months of heroic endurance was she going to confess herself beaten, worn out?

"Child, child," he said, "don't give way like this—for me, for my sake hold out a little longer."

But still Joyce said nothing.

"Speak, my dear," he went on nervously. "Do you see anything? Has something frightened you? Have you lost your courage at last?"

Joyce roused herself with an evident effort.

"Frightened, Uncle Archie, no! I never felt myself safer in my life. Never for one hour since Mab died have I lost the sense of her presence; but I never felt her so near as I do now. A moment ago I felt her so close to me that I wondered at myself for not seeing her. I fancied you—everyone in the boat—must see her beside me. I thought something must be wrong with my eyes—that they must be 'holden' as once the disciples' were—"

"My dear, my dear!" moaned Uncle Archie, fearing that Joyce's brains were leaving her.

"It's true, Uncle Archie," and now Joyce's voice, as it grew lower grew strangely sweet and solemn, "and if I saw a score of angels spreading their wings over the boat I could not feel safer. One way or another, I feel it is all ending now, and whichever way it ends,"—this even more solemnly than before—"I know it is all right."